



New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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Chapter:	A	Screening	8-29-2011
Subchapter:	3	CWS	
Issuance:	300	CWS Referrals	

CHILD WELFARE SERVICE REFERRALS

3-20-2006

CWS referrals primarily screened by SCR -- The SCR Screener documents a child welfare service referral as a Child Welfare Service Intake in the NJ SPIRIT system, with a printable "Intake Summary."

Local Offices can screen CWSI&R locally -- Local Offices throughout the state retain the ability to screen local CWS referrals and I&Rs. Any indication of child abuse/neglect, however, must be directed promptly to SCR.

Situations in which a Local Office might be most likely to screen a CWS referral include:

- A court orders CP&P to assess the needs or circumstances of a child or a family; see [CP&P-II-A-1-100](#).
- A "walk-in" to the field office, who seeks services for his or her family; see [CP&P-II-A-1-100](#).
- A written correspondence/letter to the field office, in which the writer requests services or expresses a child welfare concern.

Field Office faxes report to SCR -- If a CWS referral is taken directly at a field office, the local staff member handling the referral completes an Intake Summary (using a paper format, completing it manually), enters the names of the assigned Child Welfare Worker and Supervisor, and faxes a copy to SCR for data entry. Note: SCR is the only office/operation within CP&P that is programmed to enter data into NJS at present. (Field offices are programmed for "read only.")

Interstate referrals are screened, documented, and handled by the CP&P Interstate Services Unit.

If a Local Office receives a telephone or written request from an out-of-state agency, direct the caller, or forward the correspondence, to the Interstate Services Unit, Cost Center #916.

TIMEFRAME FOR RESPONSE TO CWS 1-14-2008

See [CP&P-II-C-2-300](#), Timeframes for Initial Response.

CONDITIONS FOR ACCEPTING CWS REFERRALS 12-27-2004

New Jersey Child Welfare Plan roll out -- As more and more elements of the NJ Child Welfare Reform Plan are introduced into practice over time, other Divisions within the Department of Children and Families, as well as an array of community social service providers and agencies will become more active in addressing the child welfare service needs of New Jersey's children and families. In the interim, CP&P will continue to provide such services, to address identified needs.

CWS as a voluntary service -- With the exception of court ordered services (see #1, below), child welfare services are voluntary; adults and children must be willing to accept a child welfare service intervention. If a family refuses child welfare services, CP&P has no authority to intervene further.

Who may refer -- Based on the voluntary nature of CWS, CP&P accepts referrals from the following credible sources and individuals only:

- A parent/caregiver, a youth, an immediate household member (i.e., one of the persons who live together, comprising a household), an extended family member who is close to the family, or a former household member (an individual who has a first-hand account of the conditions and interactions within the household).
- A helping professional who has concerns about a child. Professionals include, but are not limited to: doctors, therapists, counselors, and school day care staff.

Note: A "baby-sitter" may meet these criteria, based on his or her relationship to role with the family.

Impact on the child -- CP&P intervenes in CWS situations based on the impact that the reported situations has on the child.

PROVISION OF CWS AS REQUIRED BY STATE STATUTE 5-10-2010

SCR accepts child welfare service referrals, to address State statute requirements --

The following New Jersey statutes require CP&P to provide services or to take other action in given situations. If a report concerns risk to a child, a CPS report/investigation is warranted, rather than CWS case handling. Other matters may be appropriately handled by referral to other, more appropriate services and agencies. CP&P has developed policy, where noted:

- N.J.S.A. 30:4C-15.5 to 15.10, Safe Haven infant services. See policy at [CP&P-IV-C-5-100](#).
- N.J.S.A. 9:23-1 et seq., CP&P compliance with the Interstate Compact on Juveniles and the out-of-home placement of children. The response to Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) requests and inquiries is coordinated by the Interstate Services Unit.

Respond within five (5) work days -- The CWS assignment has an extended timeframe for field staff to initiate a response -- within five (5) work days.

The field response time may be timelier in court ordered situations (e.g., Priority Orders, issued by a sending state's "family" court, requiring a timelier home study).

- N.J.S.A. 2A:4A-42b, 43b(5), 46a, and 89c, delinquency and Juvenile-Family Crisis matters, in which CP&P may be consulted, when appropriate to a given situation; included in a pre-dispositional conference to develop a plan for a youth; etc. See Family Court Referrals, [CP&P-II-B-1-1350](#).
- N.J.S.A. 30:4C-11, CP&P intervention with at-risk pregnant women, on behalf of their unborn children, to plan for when their infants are born. "Risk" relates to issues associated with substance abuse, mental illness, lack of prenatal care, incarceration. See policy at [CP&P-III-A-1-100](#) and [CP&P-V-A-1-600](#).
- N.J.S.A. 2C:44-6.3, in which a person has been convicted of certain crimes, the victim is a minor, and the convicted person resides with a child or is the parent of a child under age 18. The Screener weighs factors - such as the child victim's age and circumstances compared to those of the convicted person's child - to determine whether his or her child is at risk of harm, which would necessitate a CPS report/investigation rather than a CWS assessment.
- N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.10c, in which the sole caregiver of a child will be incarcerated, and CP&P is asked to ascertain whether the child will be

safe and his or her needs met under the care and supervision of an individual named by the parent/caregiver.

- N.J.S.A. 30:4C-23, which authorizes CP&P to take voluntary surrenders, releases of custody, and consents to adoption. See policy at [CP&P-IV-C-1-600](#) and [CP&P-IV-C-5-100](#).
- N.J.S.A. 2C:25-29b(3)(a), in which CP&P is viewed as an agency that may be court-ordered to conduct an evaluation when there is a domestic violence dispute, to assess risk of harm to the child before a visitation order is granted. See the [DCF Domestic Violence Protocol](#), "Child Welfare Services (CWS) Assessments Required by State Statute," in Section IV.

TYPES OF PRESENTING SITUATIONS ACCEPTED AS CWS 8-29-2011

Types of CWS referrals accepted by SCR, in addition to the above situations required by statute, include, but are not limited to:

1. Court order

An order issued by a court - generally the Superior Court, Chancery Division, Family Part - that directs CP&P to assess a family's, or a specific child's, need for service. See [CP&P-II-B-1-1350](#).

Note: Under the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, CP&P may be court ordered to conduct an evaluation. N.J.S.A. 2C:25-29b(3)(a). See the [DCF Domestic Violence Protocol](#), "Child Welfare Services (CWS) Assessments Required by State Statute," in Section IV.

When appropriate, the local office's Court Liaison refers court orders to Youth Case Management at the Children's System of Care (CSOC) for follow up and service provision by that agency, rather than CP&P.

Note: If the court order is received at the local office or through the local Court Liaison, the order may be handled by the local office operation.

The Court Liaison or designated staff at the local office completes an Intake Summary (using a paper format, completing it manually), enters the names of the assigned Child Welfare Worker and Supervisor, and faxes a copy to SCR's Production Control Unit for data entry, to register the referral in NJS.

Note: SCR is the only office/operation within CP&P that is programmed to enter data into NJ SPIRIT at present. (Field offices are programmed for “read only.”)

2. Request to assist law enforcement agency

- A request from a local police department for immediate assistance to resolve a family conflict, often centering on a need for a child to go home.
- A written or oral request from a law enforcement agency (e.g., the local or State police, the County Prosecutor, a Medical Examiner, etc.) that CP&P assess a family’s ability to meet the basic care needs of one or more children in the family.
- A request to assess the plan for a child’s immediate supervision and care when the child is arrested, ready to be released from police custody, and the parent/caregiver is not immediately available.
- A request to assess the plan for a child’s immediate supervision and care, when a parent/caregiver is arrested. See [CP&P-II-B-1-2000](#).

3. Parenting skills, capacity and/or capability

- A request for services based on concerns about a parent’s ability to effectively and appropriately “parent” a child.
- A request for services, or a request for an assessment of service needs, for a child or family due to the parent’s physical disability or developmental limitations.

4. Mental health problems (of the parent/caregiver)

A request for services based on a reporter’s concerns that a parent or caregiver has a suspected or diagnosed mental illness that may impair his or her ability to meet the basic care needs of the children in the home.

5. Referrals of non-familial sexual assault

A request for services regarding the sexual assault of a child, in which there is no reason to suspect child abuse/neglect. (Non-familial sexual assault is investigated by the police/law enforcement.)

SCR accepts referrals of non-familial sexual assault matters when the police have been notified of the incident, and:

- Child welfare or other support services are needed which CP&P can provide or effectively coordinate in the community; and/or
- There is a need for a CP&P assessment of the child's and/or family's service needs.

6. Child-on-child sexual activity

See [CP&P-II-B-1-550](#), Reports and Referrals Regarding Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse and Child-on-Child Sexual Activity.

7. Parole Exchange

See [CP&P-II-B-1-2100](#), Interagency Affiliation Agreement for Parole Placement Plans.

Such referrals are processed through SCR Special Duties Unit. Referrals on families in open case status or currently under CPS investigation are handled by the assigned Worker and Supervisor.

Note: Requests for home studies under the Parole Exchange Program are given a five (5) work day field response (sooner, if warranted, determined by the Supervisor, based on the presenting situation).

8. Juvenile Parole

See [CP&P-II-B-1-2100](#) for information on Interagency Affiliation Agreement Regarding Juvenile Parolees Presenting Potential Protective Service Concerns.

A request from the Juvenile Justice Commission for CP&P to conduct a home study for a juvenile parolee with a history of committing certain specified offenses being considered for release to home or family, when the family is an active CP&P case, a closed CP&P case, or the home is a resource family home in active status. CP&P intervenes to assure the safety of minor children residing with the juvenile parolee.

Juveniles who committed the following offenses are considered: homicide, sexual offense, charges of a sexual nature, child endangerment, and/or child abuse/neglect.

Note: Requests for home studies under the JJC Affiliation Agreement are given a five (5) work day field response (sooner, if warranted, determined by the Supervisor, based on the presenting situation).

9. Adoption planning (may start before a child is born)

10. Emancipated minors, refugee minors

For policy on intervention on behalf of emancipated minors, see [CP&P-III-A-1-200](#).

For policy on intervention on behalf of non-US citizen minors, see [CP&P-III-A-1-300](#) and [CP&P-III-A-1-400](#).

CALLS ON ACTIVE CASES UNDER INVESTIGATION 7-8-2005

Handling non-CPS calls on active cases - Often SCR receives requests for services or “new” additional information regarding children named in current investigations or in active case status. The SCR Screener handles the call as a “CWS” or an “I&R,” as appropriate.

The SCR Screener takes action based on the nature of the situation, the time of day the call is received, who is making the call, and the Division’s roles and responsibilities toward the child and family, as follows:

- Identify the assigned Worker and Supervisor. Assist the caller to directly contact assigned staff at the local field office, to initiate a service request or provide relevant information; (SCR does not complete an Intake Summary; the SCR Screener documents the call in his or her Call Log. See [CP&P-II-A-1-100](#).) or
- Document the call on an Intake Summary computerized application; transmit it to the Local Office which supervises the case for follow-up, as appropriate; or
- Document the call on an Intake Summary, and assign the referral for immediate SPRU Worker intervention after hours, if appropriate.